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UNDER THE DIRECTION OF THE COMMITTEE OF GENERAL LITERATURE AND EDUCATION,  
APPOINTED BY THE SOCIETY FOR PROMOTING CHRISTIAN KNOWLEDGE.

**SOME ACCOUNT OF THE ARCTIC REGIONS,  
AND OF THE VOYAGES UNDERTAKEN FOR THE DISCOVERY OF A NORTH-WEST PASSAGE FROM THE  
ATLANTIC TO THE PACIFIC.**



SNOW VILLAGE, FROM CAPTAIN LYON'S PRINT.

## THE NORTH WEST PASSAGE.

THE existence of a North-West Passage, or of a navigable communication between the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans round the northern coast of America, is a question which has exercised the ingenuity of the learned for the last three centuries; and the return of our adventurous countryman Captain Ross, from his renewed efforts to aid in its determination, has once again created a lively interest upon the subject among all classes. Its object may be briefly explained thus.

The greater part of the land contained on the surface of our globe, is collected into two great masses; the one of which is situated in its eastern hemisphere, and is called the Old World; the other in its western hemisphere, and termed the New World. The former, which is composed of the united continents of Europe, Asia, and Africa, presents one unbroken mass of land, stretching from the Cape of Good Hope in the south, to the Arctic Sea in the north. The New World, or the continent of America, forms a similarly uninterrupted barrier, extending a nearly equal length, from the Straits of Magelhaens in the South, to a point yet undetermined in the North. The Atlantic Ocean, is interposed between these two masses, on one side of the globe, and the Pacific Ocean separates them on the opposite side. Previous to the close of the fifteenth century, it was not known that any communication existed between these oceans; in other words, the countries situated on the Atlantic, (including of course the principal nations of Europe,) had no maritime connexion with those washed by the Pacific, (of which the East Indies forms a part.) There are at present two

practicable routes by which such communication is maintained. The one is, by the southern extremity of the Old World, or the Cape of Good Hope, the other, by the southern extremity of the New World, through the Straits of Magelhaens, or round Cape Horn. They may be termed respectively the South-East Passage and the South-West Passage, from the Atlantic into the Pacific. Each of these passages, however, implies the necessity of sailing to the southern end of the Atlantic, before either the eastern or the western turning into the Pacific can be reached; and as the chief maritime nations of the world are placed much nearer to its northern end, it has occurred to them, that if they were to sail to the northern instead of the southern extremity, and then turn to the east or to the west, they would reach the Pacific much sooner; in other words, that a North-East Passage (round the northern coast of Europe and Asia,) or a North-West Passage (round the northern shores of America,) would be a much shorter route than the existing South-East or South-West Passage.

But obstacles exist to the accomplishment of either of these northern passages, which do not exist in the southern routes. The northern shores of both the Old and the New World are situated in much higher latitudes than their southern limits, and are therefore subject to a much more intense degree of cold; so that while the waters that bound the latter are at all times open to the seaman, those which encircle the former, are during the greater portion of the year frozen into a vast icy barrier, entirely obstructing all navigation. Another circumstance also operates to the same effect. In accomplishing either of the southern passages, the navigator has merely to round a jutting promontory in a high latitude; but in

attempting either of the northern routes, he has to pass a long line of coast extending above  $100^{\circ}$  or  $180^{\circ}$  of longitude under the same frozen parallel.

The question of a North-East Passage has long since ceased to excite much interest. It is certain, indeed, that a sea extends from Behring's Strait to the Spitzbergen Seas; but the passage has never yet been performed, and may be fairly assumed to be impracticable. A North-West Passage would be a much shorter route; but a shorter than all has been suggested, which is termed the North Polar Passage. It consists in sailing through the Spitzbergen Seas direct into the Polar Basin, or the region immediately surrounding the North Pole, and emerging at Behring's Strait; its track thus forming, as it were, the diameter of the circle presented by the northern shores of Europe and Asia on the one side, and those of America on the other. We shall now give a brief sketch of the various attempts that have been made to effect the remaining two passages, the North-West and the Polar; remarking on the obstacles that have frustrated their accomplishment, and the desiderata yet remaining for that purpose.

#### OBSTACLES TO THE ACCOMPLISHMENT OF THE NORTH-WEST PASSAGE.

THE difficulties which impede the navigation of the Arctic Seas, arise, as we have before observed, from the extreme cold to which their high latitude exposes them. Owing to the spherical form of the earth's surface, and the obliquity of its axis, the sun is, for a considerable portion of the year, entirely withdrawn from these regions. Throughout this long and dreary night, an intense frost prevails. As early as the month of August, snow begins to fall; a rapid formation of ice ensues; along the shores and bays, the fresh water, poured from rivulets, or drained from the thawing of former collections of snow, becomes quickly congealed; the surface of the sea is spread over with ice, and its waters are firmly bound up into one solid mass. The gloomy darkness of impenetrable winter now reigns throughout; occasionally, indeed, relieved or aggravated, by the moon's feeble rays.

At length the sun reappears; but it is long before his faint and languid beams impart much warmth to the dreary waste. Gradually, however, their power increases; the snow begins to melt, the ice slowly dissolves, and the ocean is once again set free. The massy sheet which its surface lately formed is now broken into a thousand fragments, of various size and thickness: these, impelled by the violence of winds and currents, are dispersed in all directions, sometimes meeting with fearful shock, and shivering each other into atoms. This disruption of the ice generally happens about the month of June; and a few weeks are commonly sufficient to disperse the floating fields.

The sea is at last open, for a short and dubious interval, to the pursuits of the adventurous seaman; but the navigation is accomplished only with great difficulty to him, and at the imminent hazard of his being crushed by these floating fields of ice. Another obstacle, not less formidable, impedes his progress; namely, the icebergs, or insulated mountains of ice, which float like lofty towers upon the ocean, threatening to overwhelm with instant destruction the frail bark that sails beneath. These are formed by the congelation of the fresh water that pours annually into the ocean, and are collected along the indented shores and in the deep bays enclosed by precipitous rocks. Every successive year adds to their size, till at length, by the action of their own accumulated weight, and the undermining of the sea, the enormous blocks are broken off, and precipitated into the ocean below. These mountains of hard and perfect ice are probably the gradual production of many years. Their substance is clear, compact, and solid; and their tint of a fine green, verging to blue. Its clearness is generally interrupted by numerous small air-bubbles; but large pieces may be occasionally obtained, possessing a degree of purity and transparency, equal to that of the most beautiful crystal. Captain Scoresby states that, with a lump of ice, of by no means regular convexity, used as a burning lens, he has frequently burnt wood, fired gunpowder, melted lead, and lit the sailors' pipes, to their great astonishment; the ice itself remaining, in the mean while, quite firm and pellucid. The salt-water ice, on the other hand, is porous, incompact, and only imperfectly transparent; and is annually formed and destroyed. The appearance of a numerous collection of icebergs is described as interesting in the extreme. Along the western coast of Greenland, they

form an immense rampart, which presents to the mariner a sublime spectacle, resembling at a distance whole groups of churches, mantling castles, or fleets under full sail.

#### HISTORY TO THE CLOSE OF THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY.

THE first navigator whose efforts appear to have inspired a reasonable hope of finding the North-West Passage, was Gaspar de Cortereal, a Portuguese, who, in the year 1500, discovered the country called Labrador. Coasting thence to the northward, and reaching the wide opening of Hudson's Strait, he concluded that he had found the so-much-desired passage into the Pacific, which he named the Strait of Anian. He returned to Portugal and in the following year embarked on a second expedition, with two vessels; but having been separated from his consort by bad weather, he was never heard of more. His brother, Michael de Cortereal, who sailed in quest of him, shared a similar fate; and it was only the positive order of the king, Manuel, which restrained a third brother from continuing the fruitless search. The two Cabotas had previously engaged in the same enterprise; but their efforts had terminated only in the discovery of Newfoundland.

Cortereal was succeeded by Aubert and Jacques Cartier on the part of France, and by Estevan Gomez on that of Spain; but all the endeavours of these navigators to discover any opening in the northern coast, that held out the least hope of a passage in that quarter, were in vain.

About the same period, the idea of a voyage to the North Pole was first suggested by Master Robert Thorne, of Bristol, who is said to have exhorted King Henry VIII. "with very weighty and substantial reasons, to set forth a discoverie, even to the North Pole." Among other advantages that were held out as the probable results, was the discovery of a shorter passage to China and the East Indies: but although an expedition was sent out for this purpose, the proceedings connected with it are scarcely at all known. The voyage of "*The Trinitie and the Minion*," to the north-west, followed in 1536, but without any further success: and between the years 1553 and 1556, Sir Hugh Willoughby, Richard Chancellor, and Stephen Burrough, performed three several voyages in quest of a North-East Passage, but could not, on account of immense shoals of ice, proceed further than the Strait of Weigats.

Notwithstanding the failure of so many attempts, the belief that America was to be passed somewhere on the north-west still remained unimpaired among the merchants and navigators of England, and was supported by the writings of the most learned men in the nation. Under the auspices of Queen Elizabeth, Martin Frobisher made three successive voyages, in 1576, 1577, and 1578; but his progress was exceedingly small. Yet their promoters were still satisfied "of the likelihood of the discovery of the North-West Passage," and they accordingly resolved on a new expedition. The conduct of this was intrusted to the celebrated John Davis, who, in 1585, succeeded in passing up the strait, which now bears his name, as high as latitude  $66^{\circ} 40'$ , and discovered the inlet called Cumberland Strait. He performed two subsequent voyages in the succeeding two years, in the second of which he stood sixty leagues up Cumberland Strait.

No further attempt was made, until the commencement of the seventeenth century, when George Weymouth departed on an expedition, fitted out at the joint expense of the Muscovy and Turkey Companies; but his voyage was a complete failure.

In the years 1605, 1606, and 1607, the King of Denmark despatched Henry Hall three several times, but all his attempts were fruitless.

As neither the passage by the north-east, nor that by the north west, seemed now to hold out much hope of success, it was resolved again to try the route across the North Pole. Accordingly Henry Hudson, an experienced and intrepid seaman, was selected for this enterprise; and, in the year 1607, he set sail from England, and stood directly for the east coast of Greenland, which he reached in latitude  $73^{\circ}$ , naming the point *Hold with Hope*; thence continuing northward, he advanced to about latitude  $81^{\circ}$ , when he was compelled by the ice to return. In the following year he was employed, without success, in search of a North-East Passage; and, in 1609, by the Dutch, in an expedition of very dubious object. In 1610 he embarked on his last and fatal voyage once again to the north-westward. Keeping to the westward, he passed the strait



which now bears his name; but, soon afterwards, his crew mutinied, and, turning him adrift in a boat, abandoned him to a miserable fate.

Sir Thomas Button followed next, in 1612, and, passing through Hudson's Strait, reached the main land of America in latitude  $60^{\circ} 40'$ . Having wintered, he advanced as high as latitude  $45^{\circ}$ , on the east coast of Southampton Island, and returned to England in the summer of 1613.

Robert Bylot, in 1615, proceeded about half a degree further north, and, in the following year, embarked with Baffin, to examine the sea lying north and west of Davis' Strait. In this voyage, one of the most remarkable and important ever accomplished in the same quarter of the globe, they traced the west coast of Greenland up Davis' Strait, as far as the northern extremity of the sea now named after Baffin; then, turning to the westward, they followed it round, and descended the opposite shores to the south, passing, in their way, several large openings, which they neglected to examine, apparently assuming them to be merely Sounds.

Luke Fox followed in 1631, and explored Hudson's Bay; and, in 1668, Zachariah Gillam was sent out by Prince Rupert, to examine the same quarter; and the results of this voyage appear to have led to the formation of the Hudson's Bay Company.

No further attempts were made on the western coast of America, until the unfortunate voyage of Knight, Barlow, and Vaughan, in 1719, on the part of the Hudson's Bay Company, in search of "the Strait of Anian, in order to discover gold, &c., to the northward;" when, of two ships that were sent out, neither returned.

John Scroggs was sent in search of them in 1722, but he returned without accomplishing any thing of the smallest note.

In 1737, a similarly unsuccessful attempt was made by the Hudson's Bay Company, at the suggestion of Mr. Arthur Dobbs, who afterwards prevailed on the Government to appropriate two vessels for this service, under the orders of Captain Middleton, who left England in 1741, and wintered in Churchill River; and, in the summer of 1742, proceeded up Sir Thomas Roe's Welcome to Wager River, and sailed round what is called *Repulse Bay*. The offer by Parliament, in 1743, of a reward of 20,000*l.* to whomsoever of His Majesty's subjects should discover a North-West Passage through Hudson's Strait, seemed to evince that the public opinion still remained decidedly in favour of its practicability. - A subscription of 10,000*l.* was entered into, and two ships were sent out, in 1746, under Captains Moor and Smith, who merely, however, ascertained that Wager River was a deep bay or inlet.

On the failure of this expedition, the public ardour seems to have been somewhat damped; and for nearly thirty years, no attempt at northern discovery by sea was made, either by the government or by private individuals; but, in 1772, Samuel Hearne accomplished a land-journey from the Prince of Wales's Fort, Hudson's Bay, to the termination of the Copper-mine River, in the Arctic Sea.

About the same time, the question of the practicability of approaching the North Pole was revived by the Hon. Daines Barrington, who presented to the Royal Society a series of papers on the subject, which induced the President and Council to apply to the Earl of Sandwich, then First Lord of the Admiralty, to obtain His Majesty's sanction for the fitting out an expedition for that service. The proposal meeting with the countenance of his Majesty, two ships, the *Race-horse* and the *Carcass* bombs, were equipped accordingly; the former under the orders of Captain Constantine John Phipps, (afterwards Lord Mulgrave,) who was appointed commander of the expedition; the latter under those of Captain Skeffington Lutwidge. They sailed from the Nore on the 10th of June, 1773, and on the evening of the 27th, reached the latitude of the south part of Spitzbergen. On the 5th of July, they fell in with the main body of the ice, which stretches across from Spitzbergen to Greenland, and commenced looking for an opening by which they might pass through. The ice was examined, from east to west, for above ten degrees, but without success; and Captain Phipps now "began to conceive that the ice was one compact impenetrable body." After repeated further attempts, the ships were beset in the ice, which soon began to press in fast, being, in many places, forced higher than the main-yard, by the squeezing together of the pieces. With the assistance of the wind they were at length extricated; and, the season being now far advanced, they returned home.

The ill success of this attempt did not cause the hopes of discovering a northern navigable communication between the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans, to be abandoned. The Act of Parliament, granting the reward of 20,000*l.*, was altered so as to include his Majesty's ships, and to extend the condition of a passage through Hudson's Bay, to that of every northern passage; and a sum of 5000*l.* was also awarded to any ship that approached within one degree of the North Pole.

In 1776, Lieutenant Pickersgill was sent in the brig *Lion*, to examine the western shores of Baffin's Bay; but the result was unsuccessful.

In the following year the same vessel was despatched, under Lieutenant Walter Young, on a similar service, and also to examine the practicability of a passage into the Pacific, in the hope of meeting Captain Cook, who was expected to be about that time engaged in attempting to pass from the Pacific into the Atlantic; but he returned without having accomplished any thing.

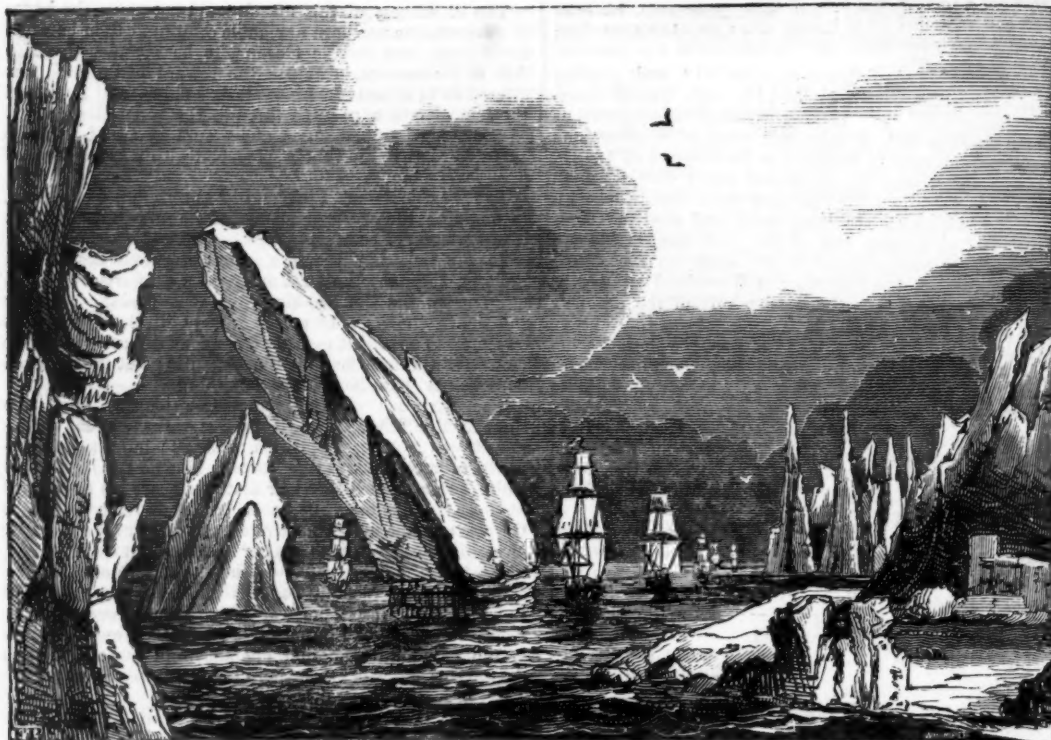
The narrative of Hearne, whose journey down the Copper-mine River to the Arctic Sea, we have already mentioned, was long regarded with mistrust; but a similar expedition, undertaken by Alexander Mackenzie, in 1789, in which he descended the river that now bears his name, and reached the Arctic Ocean, considerably to the westward of the point at which Hearne arrived, served to give a stronger appearance of truth to this latter traveller's statements, and, by proving the existence of a sea to the north of America, to increase the probability of a North-West Passage. But the long and disastrous war which soon afterwards convulsed the whole of Europe, directed the skill and resources of the nation into another channel, and put an effectual stop to the progress of northern discovery.

#### EXPEDITIONS OF CAPTAINS ROSS AND BUCHAN.

No sooner, however, had peace been restored, than the attention of the British Government was again drawn to this long-agitated question. The possibility of effecting a North-West Passage, became once more a fruitful source of debate, and was discussed with a keenness, and a regard to the results of former experience, in estimating the probability of its success, that had rarely been evinced before. The reasons assigned in its favour were many and cogent. A perpetual current setting down from the northward, along the eastern shores of America and the western coast of Greenland, was said to afford a strong presumption, that between Davis' Strait and the Great Polar Basin, there was an uninterrupted communication. The vast quantities of drift-wood floated down by this current, whose appearance frequently indicated that it had recently been in a growing state, and in a warmer climate, and whose substance denoted the produce of milder latitudes, was adduced as another powerful argument to the same effect. A third, on which equal stress was laid, was derived from the fact, well known to those engaged in the Greenland fisheries, that whales which had been harpooned in the Spitzbergen Seas and Davis' Strait, have been caught in the Pacific Ocean, on the western coast of America. The general trending of the northern coast of that continent, as indicated by the three points then known, Icy Cape, and the mouths of the Mackenzie and Copper-mine Rivers; the testimony of the native Indian maps; and the occurrence, in Greenland, of a species of heath, which had never been found in America; were all regarded as additional grounds of the same supposition.

The disappearance of a large quantity of ice from the Arctic Regions, and the removal of the icy barrier which was supposed to have, for four centuries, blocked up the eastern coast of Greenland, seemed to present an opportunity peculiarly favourable for the resumption of those labours which had been interrupted only by the political disturbances of Europe. It was resolved, therefore, that two distinct expeditions should be fitted out and despatched; the one to proceed up Davis' Strait, for a considerable distance to the northward, and then, rounding the north-east point of the continent of America, to hold a westerly course, with the view of reaching Behring's Strait; the other, to proceed in a direction as due north as might be found practicable, through the Spitzbergen Seas, and, in the event of finding an open Polar Basin, to pass across the Pole, and make for Behring's Strait, also.

Accordingly, four merchant-ships were hired and commissioned for this purpose; two of which, the *Isabella*,



SAILING THROUGH THE ICE, DESCRIBED BY CAPTAIN ROSS.

of 385 tons, commanded by Captain John Ross, and the *Alexander*, of 252½ tons, by Lieutenant William Edward Parry, were destined for the North-West Passage; and the remaining two, the *Dorothea*, of 382 tons, commanded by Captain David Buchan, and the *Trent*, of 249½ tons, by Lieutenant John Franklin, for the Polar route.

These vessels, having been most completely repaired and strengthened, so as to enable them the better to resist the pressure of the ice, and having been fitted with stores of every description for two years, dropped down the river on the 18th of April, 1818, and started for their respective destinations, with the most sanguine anticipations of success on the part of all on board, and with a confident expectation of obtaining the reward which the munificence of Parliament held out to them, in the event of a fortunate issue. Nor were the hopes of the public less eager; for never had an expedition departed from our shores, for the discovery of a northern communication between the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans, fitted out on so extensive a scale, or so completely equipped in every respect.

Early, however, in the month of October, the expedition under Captain Buchan had returned unsuccessful. The ships under his command had proceeded to about latitude 80° 30', when they were overtaken by a tremendous gale, which drove them direct into the ice, and so disabled the *Dorothea*, as to render it necessary for her to be sent home; and, as she was deemed unsafe to proceed alone, the *Trent* was obliged to accompany her.

The issue of the expedition under Captain Ross was less disastrous. The ships left Lerwick, in the Shetland Isles, on the 30th of April, and, passing Cape Farewell at a considerable distance to the south, fell in with the first iceberg on the 26th of May. Entering Davis' Strait about midway between its opposite shores, they found the ice more abundant as they advanced; and their progress was soon impeded by firm masses of this substance, which compelled them to seek a course nearer to the eastern coast. The navigation now became remarkably intricate and dangerous; and some idea of the difficulties attendant upon it may be formed from the above copy of a sketch made by Captain Ross, which represents a remarkable passage through the ice, on the 16th of June. Nevertheless, these obstacles were all surmounted by the skill and perseverance of our enterprising navigators; and on the 17th they reached Waygat Island, where the observatory and instruments were landed, and several observations made. From hence, they continued coasting to the northward; and when in

latitude 75° 54', were surprised to observe a party of Esquimaux approaching the ships over the ice, as they had passed the limit of what had been usually considered the inhabited part of Greenland. A parley was with difficulty effected; and an opportunity of closer examination was afforded. Such was the ignorance of these savage beings, that they conceived themselves to be the only human inhabitants on the face of the earth; and yet they were acquainted with the use of iron, of which they had contrived to fashion themselves knives, the material being procured, they said, from a mountain composed entirely of it, probably a meteoric mass. They appear to be the ugliest of their race, and were named by Captain Ross the "Arctic Highlanders." "The habits," he says, "of these people, appear to be filthy in the extreme; their faces, hands, and bodies, are covered with oil and dirt, and they look as if they had never washed themselves since they were born."

Proceeding on their enterprise, our navigators were astonished at the sight of cliffs covered with red snow, which, when thawed, resembled muddy Port wine. A portion of it was brought home, and submitted to the examination of chemists and naturalists; and the colouring matter was supposed to result from the vegetation of an extremely minute lichen, or moss, upon the snow. Several of the inlets, which preceding adventurers had placed in Baffin's Bay, were now passed and recognised; and, after reaching the great inlet on its northern coast, named by Baffin "Sir Thomas Smith's Sound," the course of the expedition was shaped to the west, and then to the south. A remarkable alteration in the character of the bay soon took place; the navigation became open, the sea was more free of ice than it had yet been, and extremely deep; and, on the 30th of August, they entered a wide channel, nearly fifty miles in breadth, which was soon recognised as the Sir James Lancaster's Sound of Baffin. Much interest was excited by the appearance of this strait. "As we knew," says the author of a brief narrative, published in one of the monthly journals, and which Captain Sabine pronounced to be a faithful account of the proceedings of the expedition, "as we knew that Baffin had not entered this sound, but stood away from it to the south-eastward, its appearance inspired hope and joy into every countenance; and every officer and man, on the instant, as it were, made up his mind that *this must be the North-West Passage*; the width of the opening, the extraordinary depth of water, the increased temperature, and the surrounding sea, and the strait so perfectly free from

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ice that not a particle was seen floating, were circumstances so encouraging, and so different from any thing we had yet seen, that every heart panted to explore this passage, which was to conduct us all to glory and to fortune." The ships stood directly into this spacious inlet, but they had scarcely advanced ten leagues, when the *Isabella* (Captain Ross's vessel,) bore up, and stood out of the inlet under all sail, followed, of course, by the *Alexander*. The commander, it appeared, had distinctly seen "the land round the bottom, forming a connected chain of mountains with those which extended along the north and south sides." "It is impossible," says our writer before quoted, "to picture to you the gloom that was immediately spread over every countenance, all their sanguine hopes being thus unexpectedly dashed to the ground. At the very spot where the *Isabella* bore up, the depth of water was 650 fathoms; and the temperature continued the same as at the entrance: the *Alexander* was about four or five miles astern of her consort at that time, but not the least appearance of land was visible in the direction of the inlet from her crew's nest." The ridge which appeared to Captain Ross, as extending from north to south across the bottom of the sound, was named by him *Croker's Mountains*; and a promontory which projected from about their centre, was called *Cape Rosamond*. After landing near the southern point of its entrance, the expedition quitted Lancaster Sound, the disappointment which they had experienced casting a damp on all their future proceedings.

The month of September having now set in, their course was shaped homewards, passing along the western shores of Baffin's Bay, sometimes in sight of the land, but seldom so near as to obtain much information respecting the nature of the coast. The land every where exhibited the same appearance of high mountains covered with snow; and the numerous bays and openings that were passed were generally filled with large glaciers of ice, and quite impenetrable. On the first of October, they reached the mouth of Cumberland Strait; but, from the advanced period of the season, Captain Ross did not conceive himself authorized to proceed up to explore it. From hence they stood directly for Cape Farewell, which they passed on the 9th, in a tremendous storm; and on the 30th arrived at Shetland, after an absence of six months. During this passage across the Atlantic, the *Aurora Borealis* was frequently seen, sometimes in grand and beautiful coruscations.

We have spoken of the confident anticipation of success that existed in the public mind, in regard to the issue of this, the most complete expedition that had ever been equipped for the purposes of northern discovery. In pro-

portion to the eagerness of the hope, was the bitterness of the disappointment; and the expression of the general opinion was loud in disapprobation. The attempt, it was said, had been abandoned at the very moment which presented the brightest prospect of success, and with a precipitation as unaccountable as it was ill-advised. The imperfect view of a distant ridge of hills was declared to be an insufficient ground for the hasty conclusion, that with them terminated the inlet from which they were seen; and Captain Ross's omission to avail himself of the opportunity of closely examining and surveying the western shores of Baffin's Bay, and thus greatly improving the very defective geography of our charts in that respect, was universally regarded as an act of unpardonable negligence. The opinion of the government seemed also to be, that not so much had been done as might have been done, and by no means sufficient to establish the non-existence of an opening into the Polar Sea from Baffin's Bay, and the consequent impracticability of a North-West Passage in that quarter.

#### CAPTAIN PARRY'S FIRST VOYAGE.

ACCORDINGLY a new expedition was fitted out, to proceed to Lancaster Sound, in order to ascertain whether it were an inlet terminated by land, or a strait opening to the westward; and, in the event of its proving to be the latter, to pass through it, and examine its direction and communications, with the view to reach Behring's Strait. Should it appear, however, that there was no passage through this inlet, Alderman Jones's Sound, Sir Thomas Smith's Sound, and Cumberland Strait, were to be explored in succession; and in the case of no better success, any other opening that might lead to the seas adjoining the eastern or northern coast of America, was to be attempted. Two strong vessels, the *Hecla*, of 375 tons, and the *Griper*, of 180 tons, were selected for this purpose; and having been strengthened in a similar manner to the *Isabella* and *Alexander*, and furnished with provisions and stores for two years, were placed,—the former, under the orders of Lieutenant (now Sir Edward) Parry, who had accompanied Captain Ross in the preceding voyage, and was appointed commander of the present expedition, the latter under those of Lieutenant Matthew Liddon. The ships were manned with a full complement of excellent seamen; nearly the whole of those who had served on the former occasion, having again volunteered their services.

They left England on the 11th of May; on the 1st of August, they approached Lancaster Sound, and here the interesting portion of their voyage commenced. All sail was crowded; and a strong easterly breeze carried them



THE HECLA AND GRIPER, AS SECURED FOR THE WINTER, DURING CAPTAIN PARRY'S FIRST VOYAGE.

rapidly to the westward. "It is more easy" continues Captain Parry "to imagine, than to describe the almost breathless anxiety which was now visible in every countenance, while, as the breeze increased to a gale, we ran quickly up the sound. The mast-heads were crowded by the officers and men during the whole afternoon; and an unconcerned observer, if any could have been unconcerned on such an occasion, would have been amused by the eagerness with which the various reports from the crow's-nest were received, all, however, hitherto favourable to our most sanguine hopes." Thus continuing to advance to the westward, our navigators had before midnight passed the limits of the previous voyage, and yet had met with no obstacles to impede their further advance. On the contrary, every indication seemed favourable; the sea was deep, in colour and swell resembling the ocean; and the opposite shores of the inlet (which was named *Barrow's Strait*) still preserved a wide distance. On reaching longitude  $89^{\circ} 18'$ , a small island was discovered a-head, from which a complete barrier of ice stretched across to the northern shore of the passage. This obstructed all progress to the westward; but the channel to the south, still presented a broad inlet, open and navigable. In descending this opening, (to which, the name of *Prince Regent's Inlet* was given,) the compass, which had for some time past been remarked to be sluggish in its movements, exhibited the curious phenomenon of actually losing all power of motion, "the directive power of the needle becoming so weak, as to be overcome by the attraction of the ship; so that the needle might now be properly said to point to the North Pole of the ship." For the purposes of navigation, therefore, the compasses were no longer consulted; and the binnacles were removed as useless lumber from the deck; the true courses of the ship, and the direction of the wind, being noted by observations of the sun's azimuth, (when that luminary was visible,) and the apparent time. After proceeding about 120 miles, they were again stopped by the ice, and compelled to return to Barrow's Strait. Here, to their great surprise, they found that the icy barrier, which, but a few days before had impeded their progress to the westward, was now entirely removed. They continued, therefore, their course in that direction, and soon reached a wide opening to the north, (*Wellington Channel*), in which they could not discern either land or ice.

The appearances of an open westerly passage were now favourable in the extreme; and the ships, after a quarter of an hour's "boring" through a narrow stream of ice, continued their course without obstruction. The land to the northward seemed to consist of a series of islands; but it had assumed a different structure, and instead of rising precipitously from the sea, offered a sloping sandy beach. *Cornwallis Island*, *Bathurst Island*, and *Byam Martin Island*, were reached in succession, and, on the eastern point of this latter, Captain Sabine and a party landed, to make observations, and to examine the natural productions of the shore. They found the remains of Esquimaux habitations, in four different places, and very recent traces of the rein-deer and musk-ox were visible. A comparison of the magnetic observations made here, with those made in Prince Regent's Inlet, led them to conclude that they had, in sailing over the intervening space, crossed immediately to the northward of the Magnetic Pole; but their peculiar situation prevented them from devoting their attention to this interesting subject in any great degree. From the prevalence of fogs and ice, the difficulty of steering a proper course became very great, and a tedious navigation could only be effected through the narrow channel of water, which stretched between the ice and the land on the north, sometimes extended to four or five miles in width, at others contracted to only a few hundred yards. Another large island, which they named *Melville Island*, was now reached; and, on the 4th of September, they succeeded in crossing the meridian of  $110^{\circ}$  west longitude, in the latitude of  $74^{\circ} 44' 20''$ , by which they became entitled to the sum of 5000*l.*, being the first reward in the scale, granted by the Act of Parliament for the discovery of the longitude.

A firm barrier of ice now opposed their further progress, and compelled them to anchor, for the first time since they had left the coast of England; and the spot selected for this purpose, was named the *Bay of the Hecla and Griper*. After a further examination of Melville Island, they struggled hard to get to the westward, and, by the 17th, succeeded in reaching longitude  $112^{\circ} 51'$ ; here the obstacles to their further progress were insuperable, and they were compelled to return to the eastward; and, as the season

was now far advanced, it became necessary for them to search for a secure harbour, in which to lie safely during the ensuing winter. Nor had they returned too early; for, on their arrival in the Bay of the Hecla and Griper, the head of which they had selected for this purpose, the whole of its surface was so completely covered with new ice, that they were obliged to open a canal with saws, to admit the passage of the ships; an operation which occupied the greatest part of three days, during which they cut through nearly two miles and a third of new ice, the average thickness of which was seven inches.

Being now fairly fixed in winter quarters, "the station where, in all probability," Captain Parry says, "we were destined to remain for at least eight or nine months, during three of which we were not to see the face of the sun," it became requisite to take all possible precautions for the safety of the ships, and the preservation of their stores. The whole of the masts were dismantled, except the lower ones, and the Hecla's main-top mast. A frame-work was erected over each of the ships, which was planked, and afterwards roofed with a cloth of wadding-tilt, similar to the usual covering of waggons. All the heavy stores and timber were removed from the upper-deck, and taken on shore, in order to give as much room as possible for exercise. The snow was banked up round the ships as high as the main-chains, and warmth and dryness in the interior were provided for by stoves and ovens. Judicious regulations were established for the distribution of provisions, so as to meet at once the suggestions of economy, and a prudent regard for health. The personal cleanliness and good order of the men, were secured by a regular inspection both morning and evening, and the most prompt and effectual means adopted for detecting and checking the slightest appearance of scurvy. The men were allowed to take exercise on shore; or, if the weather were too inclement, to run round the deck to the tune of an organ, or to one of their own songs. Hunt ng-parties were frequently sent on shore, in search of rein-deer and grouse, until these animals migrated, when only foxes and wolves remained behind. In these excursions, the severe effects of the cold were sometimes attended by danger; several frost-bites took place, and, in one or two cases, where the ordinary practice, of immersing the injured part in snow, failed, amputation was obliged to be resorted to.

In order to guard against the predisposition to attacks of scurvy, induced by mental depression, recourse was had to theatrical amusements. A weekly newspaper was also set on foot, called *The North Georgia Gazette and Winter Chronicle*; and by these means our hardy adventurers contrived, in some measure, to relieve the dull and tedious monotony of their gloomy existence. The scene, indeed, without, was cheerless in the extreme; to use the words of Captain Parry, "it was the death-like stillness of the most dreary desolation, and the total absence of animated existence." Its character is well expressed in the view, page 213.

Thus occupied, time passed more quickly than they could have expected, and the shortest day, or rather the middle of the long night, came upon them unawares. At a little before and after noon, there was so much light afforded, as to enable them to read small print, but only by turning it directly towards the south. The new year commenced with mild weather, but its severity soon increased, until it was with difficulty that they could pass and repass between the two ships. The Aurora Borealis now made its appearance; and, on the 15th of January, they were gratified by a sight of the only very brilliant and diversified display which occurred during the whole winter. On the third of February, the upper limb of the sun was seen from the Hecla's main-top, for the first time since the eleventh of November, a period of eighty-four days; and, on the seventh, his full orb was above the horizon. This month was the coldest they had yet experienced, but its severity was, in some degree, compensated by the sun's presence.

The mildness with which the month of March was ushered in, inspired our navigators with the hope, that the season had at length taken that favourable turn, for which they had so long been anxiously looking. On the thirtieth of April, the thermometer rose to the freezing (or rather thawing) point, being the first time that such an event had occurred for nearly eight months. The first ptarmigan made its appearance on the twelfth of May, and the next day were seen the tracks of rein-deer and musk-oxen, indicating their route to be directly to the northward. In the evening of the twenty-fourth, a smart shower of rain



was hailed with surprise and delight; and, on the 1st of June, the weather was so favourable, that Captain Parry determined to proceed on a journey across Melville Island, to the northern shore. After an absence of fifteen days, he returned, having accomplished his object without perceiving any land to the northward or westward. In the mean while, the equipment of the ships had proceeded with diligence; and the gradual dissolution of the ice upon the sea, and of the snow upon the land, seemed to promise a speedy release. It was not, however, till the 1st of August, that the ships were enabled to leave Winter Harbour, and proceed to the westward; but their progress was soon stopped by the dangerous and impassable state of the ice. After struggling until the 16th, when they had reached the longitude of  $113^{\circ} 46' 43''$ , in latitude  $74^{\circ} 27' 50''$ , the attempt to proceed further was abandoned as impracticable, and the ships were secured until the opportunity should be favourable for returning. While thus engaged, a herd of musk-oxen were seen at a little distance, and a party despatched in pursuit; they succeeded in killing a fine bull, whose unwieldiness had separated him from the rest, and in the evening another was obtained. The supply of fresh meat which they afforded was welcome; the first giving 369 and the other 352 pounds of beef, which was served out to the crews in lieu of salt meat, and much relished, notwithstanding the strong taste of musk which pervaded it.

On the 26th the ships were again in motion, and all sail was made to the eastward. They quitted Lancaster Sound on the 31st, and immediately commenced a survey of the western coast of Baffin's Bay, which they continued until stopped by the ice in the latitude of  $68^{\circ}$ . From hence they were obliged to run to the eastward, and, after repeated fruitless attempts to approach the land, being convinced of the impossibility of any further examination, determined to make the best of their way for England, which they reached early in November, to the great joy of all their countrymen, and to the infinite satisfaction of those at whose immediate suggestion the enterprise had been planned.

#### CAPTAIN PARRY'S SECOND VOYAGE.

THE results of this voyage of Captain Parry, though not favourable to the practicability of a North-West Passage in that particular direction in which he had sought it, were, certainly, highly encouraging as to its existence, and very important in a geographical point of view. The peculiar position and arrangement of the numerous islands, through which he succeeded in working his way to the westward, appeared to cause an accumulation of ice, so firmly jammed between their opposite shores, as to present an effectual barrier to his proceeding further in that same latitude. These obstacles, it was thought, would be diminished, if an opening could be found, seven or eight degrees lower than that of Sir James Lancaster's Sound, and in the same parallel as that in which the northern coast of America was supposed to lie. It was necessary, therefore, that the eastern coast of that continent should be minutely examined to the northward, from the highest point to which it had been clearly ascertained to reach, in order that its north-east extremity might be accurately determined. For this purpose Captain Parry was ordered to proceed on a second expedition with his old ship, the *Hecla*, attended by the *Fury*, a ship similarly prepared, for her consort. Their internal fittings were somewhat altered, so as to render them more commodious; the seamen's berths were removed from the sides, which are the coldest parts, and slung in the central part of the deck; charred cork was placed between the sides and the internal lining of plank, as an additional security against the cold; and a simple and very effectual apparatus for distributing heated air, was also fitted in each ship.

The two vessels left the *Nore* on the 8th of May, 1821, and, crossing the Atlantic, proceeded through Hudson's Strait with as much speed as the difficulties of the navigation would permit. It was not till the 2nd of August that they reached the eastern extremity of the channel, formed between Southampton Island and the coast to the north, and which Captain Parry believed to be the same that Middleton, in 1742, termed the *Frozen Strait*. The ice was here abundant, but consisted of broken detached masses. After the most anxious consideration, he came to the resolution of attempting to force a passage through it, by which he would be saved the necessity of proceeding round Southampton Island, a distance of from 170 to 200 leagues. With much inter-

ruption he succeeded, and emerged into a magnificent harbour, which was named the *Duke of York's Bay*.

On the 21st of August, our navigators found themselves in Repulse Bay, in which not a piece of ice was to be seen that could obstruct them in its thorough examination. The main object of the voyage may be said to have now commenced. From the 22nd of August to the end of September, they were engaged in the difficult and wearisome labour of exploring every inlet and opening that might by possibility afford a passage to the west; a task which was executed with indefatigable and zealous perseverance, and a minute precision, never surpassed. The difficulties were indeed appalling; nevertheless, the unremitting exertions of our skilful seamen succeeded in examining an extent of coast exceeding 200 leagues, and in surveying the large inlets which appear on our charts, under the names of *Lyon's Inlet*, *Hoppner's Inlet*, *Gore Bay*, *Ross Bay*, together with a number of smaller coves and creeks. Scarcely, however, had they completed their toilsome occupation, when unequivocal symptoms of the setting in of winter were apparent, and warned them that it was time to look for some spot where they might securely brave the inclemency of the approaching season.

A small island was fixed upon, and named *Winter Island*; and here they established themselves in a manner similar to that adopted on the preceding occasion, but with all the improvements which their previous experience had suggested. The same precautions for the safety of the ships and stores were taken; and the same sources of occupation and amusement, that had formerly proved so beneficial, were again resorted to. In addition to the theatrical entertainments, they had occasional performances of music; and the establishment of a school in each ship, served at once to divert and to improve the men's minds. The advantages of this last institution were great and manifest; it is sufficient to mark as one of the results, that on the return of the ships to England, "Every man on board could read his Bible." But, perhaps, of all the circumstances which more immediately contributed to their interest and amusement, the most effectual was the unexpected appearance, on the 1st of February, of a number of strange people coming towards the ships over the ice. They were discovered to be a party of Esquimaux; and a friendly intercourse was immediately formed with them. Captains Parry and Lyon accompanied them to their huts on shore, and were agreeably diverted by the uncommon spectacle of a snow village.—See engraving, page 209.

"When it is remembered," says Captain Parry, that these habitations were fully within sight of the ships, and how many eyes were continually on the look-out among us for any thing that could afford variety or interest in our present situation, our surprise may, in some degree, be imagined, at finding an establishment of huts, with canoes, sledges, dogs, and above sixty men, women, and children, as regularly, and to all appearance as permanently fixed, as if they had occupied the same spot for the whole winter." In the construction of these extraordinary houses, not a single material was used but snow and ice. They were formed of oblong blocks of the former substance, six or seven inches thick, and about two feet long, disposed in successive layers in a circular form, each layer resting on its edge, and inclining inward until the sides of the building approached so near as to leave only a small aperture at the top, into which the *key stone* [block] was fitted with much nicety. The interior was no less remarkable; after creeping through two continuous passages, each about ten feet long and from four to five feet in height, and each possessing an arched doorway, our voyagers came to a small circular apartment, which opened by three doorways into as many inhabited apartments, one on each side of, and the other opposite to, the entrance. "The interior of these huts presented a scene no less novel than interesting. The women were seated on the beds at the sides of the huts, each having her little fire-place or lamp, with all her domestic utensils about her; the children crept behind their mothers, and the dogs, except the female ones, which were indulged with a part of the beds, slunk out past us in disdain."

The stature of the Esquimaux is described as somewhat lower than that of Europeans in general. One man, unusually tall, measured five feet ten inches. Their faces are round and full, their eyes small, black and narrow; their nose is also small, and sunk in between the cheek-bones, but not much flattened. Their hands and feet are remarkably little, and their legs straight, with large knees;

their skin is smooth, and of a light brown complexion; their clothing is warm and comfortable, and consists both of deer-skin and seal-skin. It comprises, usually, a jacket and trousers; and in the winter they wear a double suit. Their legs and feet are so well clothed, that no degree of cold can well affect them. Their general appearance is well delineated in the engraving below.

It was not till the 2nd of July, that the ships finally effected their escape, and commenced their course to the northward up Fox's Channel, with the view of rounding the peninsula, (named *Melville*), which the statements of the Esquimaux led them to believe, formed the north-eastern point of America. Through an intricate and dangerous navigation, they reached a channel turning to the westward, to which was given the name of the *Strait of the Fury and Hecla*. Scarcely had they formed the hope of being now in the direct route to the Polar Sea, when they were stopped by an unbroken sheet of ice, which bore evident marks of having been long fixed there. All their attempts to force a passage were unsuccessful, and at length they returned to the mouth of the strait, and were again compelled to winter at an island, called *Iglolik*. Here they were visited by another and a more numerous party of Esquimaux. The houses of these were constructed of snow, similarly to those in Winter Island; some, however, were lined with skins; the entrance-passages to others were formed of large flat slabs of ice, cemented by snow and water; and there were some entirely constructed of this material, of a circular or octangular form.

The ships were extricated, by means of sawing, from their winter quarters by the middle of August, and returned to Shetland on the 10th of October, 1823.

#### CAPTAIN PARRY'S THIRD VOYAGE, AND JOURNEY ON THE ICE.

THE result of this laborious undertaking, sufficiently proved the futility of attempting a North-West Passage, by the way of Hudson's Bay. The most likely route of succeeding appeared to Captain Parry to be, now, through Prince Regent's Inlet, which, running to the south-west, is obliquely opened by the current round the north of America. Accordingly, a third expedition was fitted out, consisting of the same ships, and nearly the same officers and men. This was intrusted to Captain Parry, who departed on the 19th of May, 1824. This certainly was the least successful of this navigator's efforts. Owing to the state of the ice, he had not reached Prince Regent's Inlet before the season was too far advanced for commencing operations. Winter

quarters were therefore established on the eastern shore, at Port Bowen, in which the ships remained until the end of July in the following year. In attempting then to proceed along the western shore of the inlet, the *Fury* was much damaged by the ice; and a gale of wind, which afterwards followed, drove her on shore, by which she was so much injured that it was deemed necessary to abandon her. This event put an end to all further progress, and the *Hecla* returned home.

In order to co-operate with this expedition, Captain Lyon was despatched from England with the *Griper* in 1824, to winter in Repulse Bay, and thence to proceed to the northern shores of America, round its north-eastern point. The whole of this voyage was a continued struggle against bad weather, and before he could reach Repulse Bay, Captain Lyon's ship was so disabled that he was compelled to return.

Notwithstanding the failure of these attempts, the ardour of Captain Parry was in no wise damped. He offered himself to the Admiralty, to engage in the project of proceeding from Spitzbergen to the North Pole, across the barrier of ice which had impeded Captain Buchan's advance in 1818. The offer, backed by the recommendation of the Royal Society was accepted, and the *Hecla* was again fitted out. Two boats were constructed, as light as they could be made, consistent with strength; they were covered with waterproof canvass and lined with felt. Runners were fixed on each side of the keel; in order to meet the uncertainty of the space to be passed, being water or ice. On the 4th of April, 1827, Captain Parry departed, and on the 21st of June had entered on the arduous part of his undertaking. It is scarcely necessary to say that it was unsuccessful. The ice, which had been represented as consisting of one uniform level sheet, was found to present every diversity of surface, and soon after the party had reached the latitude of  $82^{\circ} 36'$ , they had the mortification to be carried backwards by the drifting of the snow-fields, on which they were travelling. The expedition therefore returned to England.

We have already exceeded our limits, but the subject is far from exhausted. We shall, therefore, return to it in our next Supplement, where we purpose giving an account of the land journeys of Captain Franklin with Dr. Richardson, and of the co-operative voyage of Captain Beechey; concluding with some particulars of the late remarkable residence of Captain Ross, for four years, in the Arctic Regions, and the progress of Captain Back, who has been despatched in search of him.



ESQUIMAUX, FROM CAPTAIN PARRY'S PRINTS.